

*Education Secretary will come before Congresswoman at Committee Hearing Thursday*

(Washington, DC)— Today, U.S. Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Milwaukee) wrote to Education Secretary Arne Duncan expressing concern that freezing funding for the nation's most disadvantaged schools and students could negatively impact First Lady Michelle Obama's new initiative to fight childhood obesity by forcing schools to cut physical education.

The full text of Congresswoman Moore's letter follows:

February 23, 2010

The Honorable Arne Duncan  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

I commend First Lady Michelle Obama for acting to address childhood obesity, and I am glad you are working with her on this new initiative.

The First Lady is right, this problem is solvable. In Congress, we have expanded access to nutritious foods including fruits and vegetables in schools, and I have worked to give children a third full meal instead of a snack. This not only helps fight hunger, but it also helps kids start on the path to making healthy eating choices for a lifetime.

I stand ready to work with you and the First Lady to make sure we stem this epidemic and give our kids a healthy start to life.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends high-quality physical education and increasing – not decreasing – opportunities for students to be physically active in order to effectively fight obesity. If we are going to fight obesity in all of our children – not just the ones for whom healthy food choices are readily available – we need to make a sustained commitment to physical education.

I am sure you are aware that due to budget shortfalls many struggling school districts are cutting physical education, which we all agree is critical to combat childhood obesity. This hits close to home for me since my own granddaughter's school canceled physical education at the end of last month.

To that end, Secretary Duncan, I am concerned about the proposed freeze in the Department of Education's budget for Title I, which is designed to help our country's disadvantaged students and schools. These schools have seen their budgets tighten every year and are struggling to provide equal opportunities for our children during this recession. As overall resources decline for schools with the greatest challenges in some of our poorest areas, physical education for

students is usually among the first programs to be cut. I am concerned that freezing Title I for these struggling schools only compounds budget problems and could force more schools to cut physical education, which contributes to making the problem worse instead of doing something to reduce obesity.

I look forward to your testimony before the House Budget Committee this week to further discuss the budget freeze for Title I and its potential impact on physical education and other necessary programs.

Sincerely,

Gwen Moore  
Member of Congress

cc: First Lady Michelle Obama

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For an interview with Congresswoman Gwen Moore, please contact David Frey at 202-225-4572.